

The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 191 - 200

"No. I'm not betting that much."

"Then I will have to shoot you." He casually shrugged.

"How much did you bet?" Damiano asked but not before he gave a warning look to Luca.

"I said fifty! He's the one who said fifty thousand after I shook his hand." I explained but Damiano just shook his head at me. "You didn't clarify how much, making the bet valid."

"Are you taking his side? He tricked me!" I tried to explain that I was the victim.

"I wasn't there. It's your words against his."

"Why would I lie, hmm?" I put my hands on my hips as I looked at him with a frown.

"Why would I question my men?" He tilted his head as he looked at me with a brow raised. I gave him a sour look for making a valid point.

"Better cough up those fifty G's." Luca laughed and pulled out- his gun. He didn't even blink as he casually aimed at the target paper, firing his gun a few times as if it was the easiest thing ever. I glared at him, seeing every bullet hitting the red _dot.

"I smell victory." He practically sang out. I kissed my teeth in annoyance and squinted my eyes at him.

"Fuck off. You haven't won yet." I sulked as I tried to figure out

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how not to lose fifty thousand.

"Well, since we didn't clarify the rules..." I dragged out and looked at Damiano with a grin.

“Hey handsome, wanna earn some money?”

“No, you can’t do that. The bet is you do the challenge.” Luca protested.

“Your words against mine. Unless you have proof?” I smirked.

That’s right, I can play dirty too.

“She has a point.” Giovanni backed me up for once, and Luca wasn’t looking too pleased about it.

“Damiano, will you pretty please help me?” I clasped my hand’s together and gave him my best puppy eyes.

“Sure.” He gave a sly smile and looked at Luca before drawing out his gun.

“Best out of three.” Luca said, facing the target in all seriousness.

“Fine. If that’s how many times you want me to destroy your ego.” Damiano let out his devilish smirk as he got ready.

“You might have just started a war between the two most competitive people.” Giovanni said, watching them in

amusement.

“As long they don’t kill each other, it’s fine. There is no way I am losing freaking fifty thousand dollars.”

I watched in anticipation, seeing Luca was a lot more focused

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now than he was when he thought he would be challenging me. Damiano took a quick glance at me, and gave me a wink, having me smile big before aiming his gun at the target. I couldn’t help myself as my eyes slid down to his muscular ass, giving an impressive nod as I checked him out.

I felt Giovanni’s gaze on me and turned to look at him, seeing him with his brow raised.

“What? He’s hot and he’s got a nice ass. I can’t help it.” He just shook his head at me before resuming to watch Damiano and Luca.

Shortly after, they both fired their guns. My eyes were on Damiano, observing the way he was standing and holding his gun. His entire body was relaxed and he was standing a little sideways, too. It seemed shooting was his way of relaxing, and I wouldn't be surprised if that was what he did in his free time before.

They didn't even wait after the first one and continued to fire. Three bullets flew through the air and hit their target as I watched in pure fascination. Both of them tucked their guns away and Giovanni went to grab the papers to declare the winner.

"So, who won?" I asked a little nervous. It was not like I didn't have faith in Damiano but this would go down to the very last detail, and he did shoot almost carelessly while Luca was focused.

"That's embarrassing." Giovanni laughed and showed us the papers. I stepped closer, seeing how one hole was just outside the red dot. Luca ripped the paper out of Giovanni's hand.

"Fuck!" Luca looked at me with a scowl and threw the paper away while Gio patted his shoulder in comfort.

"Let's go one more round."

"I think you have embarrassed yourself enough." Damiano crossed his arms, smirking at him.

"Yes! Oh, my God, I just won fifty thousand!" I shouted in joyful excitement to Damiano and pumped my fist into the air. He just watched me in amusement as I continued to mock Luca for being a loser.

"Shit, you must be poor if you're excited over a measly fifty thousand." Giovanni scoffed, making me look at him blankly for killing my joy.

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Damiano

"That's enough for today." I told her after watching her fire the last bullet. Althaia let out a breath and rolled her shoulders from constantly tensing her body. She would definitely be sore after today.

I watched her as she made sure there were no more bullets in the gun and the magazine before putting the safety back. I was impressed by her. She was a fast learner and fast with her hands. I had no doubt she would be great in no time as long as we kept practicing.

"You did well." I smiled, taking the gun from her as we made our way back to the table.

"You think so?" She asked excitedly and I gave her a nod.

"Better than Arianna when I was teaching her." She let out a small gasp and smiled big.

"No way! I am so going to throw that in her face. Who knows, maybe I will even be better than you. Better watch out, Damiano, I am coming for your throne." Althaia chuckled.

"Sorry to burst your bubble, love, but that's not going to happen. Though I wouldn't mind having you by my side, ruling the Kingdom with me." I winked and placed the gun on the table among the other weapons laid out.

"I guess that will do. It's not like I have any idea what to do as a Boss." She laughed. I watched as her eyes landed on the rifle.

"No, you can't try it." I said firmly before she could voice her question. She looked at me with her brows slightly raised in surprise.

"What are you, a mind reader today?"

"You were eyeing it like it was a piece of chocolate cake." I crossed my arms as she burst out laughing.

"I was just imagining how badass I would look with this one."

"You wouldn't. It will have you flying back on your ass from the force."

"I feel like you're exaggerating." I shook my head at her.

“I will show you.” I picked up the rifle, loaded a few bullets, and went back to the shooting range.

This one was much heavier and louder than she was used to. I positioned the rifle, supporting it against my shoulder, aiming before firing. My shoulder got pushed back from the force, and if she were to try it, it would have her flying on her ass since her stance still needs to be improved.

I shot a few times, showing her it was not a piece of toy she could play with. I went back, seeing her mouth slightly open as she gave an impressive nod.

“I see what you mean. That’s a powerful one.” She said in awe.

“It is. This is a Springfield M14. It’s a reliable, accurate, and powerful rifle but having a length of forty-four inches and a weight of close to eleven pounds loaded, gives it a great disadvantage in combat.” I informed, placing the rifle back on the table as I heard her let out a whistle.

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“This is awesome... How do you even have access to these weapons?” I stepped closer to her, caging her between my arms as I leaned down.

“I may love you, but there are certain things I will not share with you.” I spoke in a low tone, looking intently into her green eyes. Especially now that she was wearing her family

heirloom. I was careful with what was being said around her and warned the others about it as well.

I needed to get rid of it.

“Scared I will tell my father how to gain access to your weaponry?” She wiggled her brows, making me smirk as I slightly shook my head.

“No. I’m not worried about your father. We have a deal.” I said and took a quick glance at her necklace. A deal that made him think he could gain access if he played his cards right, while I gathered information about his organization’s infrastructure.

At first, it was because of Gaetano taking control over more territories and recruiting more men. I had to shut him down before he became too powerful and a threat. And now, other serious things were lurking.

I stepped away and pulled out my phone when it buzzed in my pocket.

Antonio

I just got an update. There are signs of her possibly waking up soon.

Damiano

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hers

Good. I'll call you later.

"You're not going to ask how I know about your weaponry?" Althaia continued.

"I assume someone ran their mouth to you." I put the phone back in my pocket and looked at her. I knew it was that shitface who told her about it.

"That was awfully specific for an assumption." she crossed her arms, giving me a suspicious look.

"Is it?"

"Yes. You don't assume, you know things for certain." She slightly squinted her eyes at me.

"There's a first for everything." I half-shrugged, dismissing her, and started to load my gun for the bullets I'd fired off earlier.

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“No, wait a minute... You know who told me otherwise you wouldn’t have made that so-called ‘assumption’.” I ignored her and tucked my gun into my waistband.

“Did you bug my hotel room?” She kept going and I sighed. Of course, she went there.

“And what if I did?” I raised a brow, tilting my head a little. She didn’t seem too surprised by it.

“How much could you hear?” Althaia frowned as her face started to get flushed. I smirked, knowing why she was suddenly feeling embarrassed. I stepped closer to her.

“Everything.” I whispered. She didn’t know I had planted cameras in her room as well, allowing me to see everything she did, and I had no plans of telling her either.

One night, I was working late in my office and I had the computer running with the live footage of her in the hotel room. I didn’t pay much attention. She was in bed, tossing around as she couldn’t sleep. Just when I was finishing the paperwork, I stopped in my tracks when a sound caught my attention. At first, I thought I had heard wrong but then I heard the sound again. I looked up but quickly averted my eyes.

She was naked in bed with her legs spread, moaning while she played with herself.

“Your voice is like a sweet melody to my ears.” I teased and she dropped her jaw.

“You were listening?!” She hissed at me, her face red from embarrassment.

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“Not for long. I turned it off to give you privacy as soon as I found out what you were doing.” I chuckled. And the very next day, I got to play with her in the

bathroom, which took everything in me not to bend her over and fuck her right away.

"But I definitely liked what I heard." I continued and she lightly smacked my arm.

"I seriously have no words... You're such a creep!." She huffed out and turned around, making me laugh at her.

"Where are you going? We're not done yet." I grabbed her arm to stop her.

"You just said it was enough for today?" She looked at me confused.

"Shooting, yes. Now, you need to learn how to fight." I told her.

"...I don't run." She scrunched up her face.

"You have to if you want to survive. Come." I led her to the middle of the field.

"Tell me what you remember."

"Uh, always go after the vital points; eyes, throat, crotch. Also, a punch to the biceps hurts like a bitch and gives temporary paralysis... And that's about it."

"Good. Now, listen carefully to me. Fighting is the absolute last resort for you. I want you to hide and it's not up for discussion." I stated firmly when she wanted to protest.

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"You may have gotten lucky earlier but that will not always be

the case. I want you to focus on your surroundings, and if you can hide, then you do so until help gets to you. Understood?"

"Fine..." She sighed and I gave a firm nod.

"You still need to outsmart your attacker. Tell me, Althaia, if you can't hide and you know you won't stand a chance in a fight, what do you do?" I watched her as her brows slightly furrowed as she thought about it. It didn't take long before she let out a smirk.

"Easy. Seduce him." She said proudly, and I gave her a blank look.

“No” I said immediately.

“Why not?” Althaia stepped closer to me and placed her hands on my chest.

“I’m pretty sure it would work...” Her hands slowly trailed down, coming dangerously close to my crotch while her breasts pressed against me.

“You look like the kind of person who knows where to touch a woman like me in all right places...” Her voice came out low and sultry. She took a hold of my hands and placed them right on her breasts while she looked at me with that innocent expression. It was getting a reaction out of me, and all I could think of were the things I wanted to do to her right now.

Those thoughts disappeared when pain erupted on the inside of my thigh, making me slightly lose my balance, and her fist went flying toward my face. Just before she could hit me right in the jaw, I blocked it. I turned her around, twisting her arm behind her back, and held her in a loose headlock.

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“Nice try.” I chuckled.

“You have to admit it was good. I almost got you.” Althaia laughed.

“All men are the same. You can’t think once all the blood has rushed down.” She continued to laugh.

“Just a little. Now, show me how you’re going to get out of this.”

“Easy.” She turned her head to look at me with a grin.

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“Hey, handsome. Fancy hitting it from the back.” I felt her

press her ass against my length, rubbing against me while she bit down on her lip and shot me a wink.

Fucking hell. This woman knows how to push my buttons.

“Focus, Althaia.” My voice came out a bit strained from her rubbing her ass against me.

“What do you do if someone grabs you like this?” I said more firmly to let myself focus.

It didn’t take her long before she turned her head to the side, protecting her airway from being cut off. I mentally praised her for her thinking.

She held onto my arm with her free hand and fingers on the inside of my arm, near her chin. She tucked her chin and roughly shrugged her shoulders to create space between us. She was doing great for someone who had no training at all, which made me even more proud of her.

Althaia still had one arm behind her back, having me curious about how she would free herself. Then she did something I did not see coming.

She bit me.

Fucking hard.

“Shit, Althaia!” I hissed as she continued to bite down hard on my arm. I let go of her to make her stop. Luckily, she wasn’t biting that hard to break through my skin. Althaia took that small window of opportunity and jabbed her elbow right into my ribs. I let out a grunt and my hold on her loosened and she pulled herself out of my grasp.

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“Never in my life have I seen anyone get out of a headlock like that. Good job.” I praised her with a smile.

“What can I say? I do have some experience with being choked. I know what to do now.” She chuckled at her own joke, having me shake my head at her but cracked a smile anyway. For some reason, she used humor as a coping mechanism. And if that was what it took for her to heal and move on from it, then so be it.

“Is your arm okay? I didn’t mean to bite that hard.” Althaia asked concerned and quickly grabbed my arm to look at it.

"It's fine, don't worry about it." I told her but a gasp escaped her lips when she looked at the bite mark.

"It's bruising and swelling! We need to get it checked!"

"My love, trust me, it's fine." I reassured her but she was still unsure as she took another look at it.

"It's all part of the training. I'll get it cleaned and it will be fine. Next time, bite harder and you will get out faster." I kissed the top of her head as I knew she felt guilty about it.

"I have been slashed too many times with a knife during training with Lorenzo. If I can survive that, then I think I will survive a bite mark." I smiled. It was another reason why my body was covered in tattoos.

"I guess... Does it hurt?"

"No, it tickles actually."

"Don Damiano is such a hardcore." She rolled her eyes and smiled.

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"All right, what's next then."

"Now I will teach you a few more moves. First, never keep your body completely upright. Have your legs spread and bend your knees slightly. This way, you won't get thrown to the ground easily..." I continued to explain everything she needed to know, and I watched her take everything to her and did as I said.

..You actually have some good strength in you. Just

remember, when you throw a punch, put your weight behind your shoulder for a more painful punch. And always keep your jaw clenched. If not, it will easily get broken if you get hit." I finished.

"Okay... That was a lot but I think I got it." Althaia looked determined to learn which was good. If something ever were to happen, then I knew she would at least be able to defend herself and get to safety.

“Good. Now, you will fight against Luca and Giovanni.” I turned around to look at them and called them over.

“Wait, both of them?!” She exclaimed, almost in horror.

“Yes. I will be observing you to figure out your strengths and weaknesses. Before you start you need to take off your necklace.”

“Oh, yeah. I forgot I was wearing it.”

“I’ll help you.” She moved her hair to the side for me to unclasp her necklace. I grabbed the chain, pretending to

unclasp it. Instead, I made one quick, sharp pull and broke the chain.

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“It broke. The chain must have gotten loose when I held you.” I removed the necklace to show it to her.

“What, no... I just got it back.” She looked upset about it.

“I’ll get it to a jeweler and have it fixed for you.” I tried to reassure her and placed the necklace in my pocket. She let out a sigh before giving a nod.

“Okay, Luca and Gio, you’re up now.” I told them and moved to stand to the side to observe them.

“Cool. Ready to run?” Luca grinned and Althaia gave him a disgusted look.

“No thanks, I don’t run.”

“We’ll see about that.” He smirked and pulled out his knife.

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Althaia

“Hold the fuck up!” I shouted when I saw Luca and Giovanni pulled out their knives.

“Why do you have a knife when I am completely unarmed?”

“You stole fifty thousand from me. I’m here to teach you a lesson.” Luca had his crazy look on. I stared at him, feeling uneasy when I remembered him telling me how he loved to cut into people’s skin.

“I won that money fair and square.” I let out a nervous laugh.

“No.” He stepped closer to me, and I just blinked a couple of times, shifting around my feet as I had no idea if he was being serious or taking the piss on me.

“Come on, Luca! You can’t be serious. Put the knife away.” I scowled and crossed my arms.

“No.” He gave me a maniac smile, coming closer to me. My eyes widened and I uncrossed my arms, taking several steps back. What the fuck was I supposed to do? How was I supposed to fight them when they were armed and I was utterly defenseless?

I looked at Damiano, seeing him observing us with his arms crossed and expression completely blank. So, he wasn’t going to say anything to save my ass? Was he really letting them skin me alive?

“Your boyfriend can’t help. You’re on your own.” Luca said as

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he was now extremely close.

“Okay, listen – “My eyes went completely wide when he swung his knife at me. I let out a scream and ducked to avoid getting slashed in the face.

“Are you fucking crazy!” I screamed at him, backing away to create as much space between us but he continued to step closer to me.

“Yes, I am. Now, run.” Then he sprinted towards me, barely giving me time to turn my body around and run. I ran as fast as I could to get away from Luca, who was close behind me. I hated running and I would rather do anything else than that. But you best believe I would definitely run for my life.

Like right now.

I could feel Luca close behind me and I pushed my legs to go faster. I had always been a fast runner even though I didn't do much of it. And right now, it was helping a lot in escaping Luca. I had no idea what to do as I desperately looked around for anything that could help me. But we were on a field, with nowhere to freaking hide!

My lungs were starting to hurt but I kept going, pushing myself to move my legs faster as I tried to think of what to do. I made a sharp turn to throw Luca off, giving me a few seconds of a lead. Just as an idea came to mind, Giovanni came into my view, blocking the way to the table with weapons.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

I completely forgot about Giovanni, who was waiting for me to come within his reach as he had his knife ready. At this

point, I just wanted to lie down and give up. But I kept

running. Even though my lungs and legs begged me to stop. My breathing came out loud and fast as I continued to force myself to keep going.

I couldn't run around Giovanni. That would slow me down and I would get caught as I could almost feel Luca's breath on my neck.

Fuck it. It's either do or die.

I put the very last energy and sprinted towards Giovanni, who was smirking and ready to grab me. Just as I came close, I threw myself to the ground and slid between Giovanni's legs.

"What the fuck?" I quickly got up on my feet, and before he could fully turn around to face me, I kicked him.

Right in the crotch.

"Motherfucker!" Giovanni let out a strangled grunt, cupping himself as he bent over. I quickly kicked the back of his legs, making him fall to his knees. With all my last strength, I pushed him forward and sat on his back to keep him from moving. I grabbed his gun from his waistband and quickly aimed it at Luca, who almost grabbed me.

“Back the fuck up.” I said with my heavy breathing as I held the gun shakily from the adrenaline pumping in me. Luca ignored me and took a step closer to grab me.

Then I pulled the trigger and shot right above his head as a warning.

“You could have shot me!” Luca shouted after he threw himself on the ground.

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“Then back the fuck up! And don’t worry, I’m not that good yet.” I said tiredly and lowered my arms.

“I know! That’s why I said you could have shot me!”

“My fucking balls...” Giovanni groaned underneath me.

“Yeah, Yeah... Oh God, I think I’m gonna throw up...” I slid off of Giovanni to lie flat on my back when I started to feel

nauseated. My heart was beating like crazy, my breath coming out harshly, and now, I was seeing stars. And it wasn’t even nighttime yet.

Damiano blocked my view as he looked down at me, frowning.

“I don’t know whether to be impressed or to be fucking pissed at you for firing that gun.”

“You sent me into battle defenseless. I wasn’t about to be chopped.” I groaned. I felt was about to die from all the running.

“You’re fucking fast. That’s good.” Luca commented. I turned to look at him, seeing he was sitting up and not looking nearly as dead as I was.

“Why did you have to kick me in the fucking balls?” Giovanni slowly rolled onto his back, wincing as he did so.

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Vouchers

“Sorry. I panicked ’cause I was about to die.” I got up on my feet, feeling my legs trembling badly. Shit, it had been a while since I last did an intense workout.

“My legs are trembling, and not in a good, mind-blowing, orgasm kind of way.” I complained and slumped against Damiano.

“You can take a break before we continue.” He put his arm around me to keep me upright.

“Nope! I am not doing any more today. I have burned enough calories.” I protested loudly.

“What I need right now is two large pizzas for myself and a soak in a hot tub.”

“I need to ice my balls...” Giovanni winced as Luca helped him up to his feet.

“You just wait, Althaia. Next time, I won’t go easy on you.” He glared at me, his voice filled with promise.

“Agreed. Since you have proven you can think fast under pressure, there is no need to go easy on you now.” Luca retorted with a mischievous smile.

“You call that easy? Running after me with a knife?!” I dropped my jaw.

“This was just to see how you do under pressure, observe your stamina and your ability to think under pressure.” Damiano informed and I groaned just thinking about what kind of torture I would have to go through next time.

“And here I thought you brought me to Italy for a nice

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vacation to meet your family.” I muttered grumpily and fatigue washed over me.

“Since you did better than expected today, you can rest. Luca, Gio,.you can have the rest of the day off.” Damiano practically ordered to which they replied with a firm nod and went on

their way.

“Carry me, please?” I had no energy left and my legs wouldn’t stop trembling when I tried to stand on my own.

“Next time, we will do a small round of laps to avoid your legs trembling after a sprint.” Damiano said as he carried me in his arms and walked towards the car.

“Why do you hate me?”

“I don’t hate you.” He chuckled.

“Then don’t make me run!” I said in all seriousness.

“It’s not avoidable. But I will make it up to you. Name what you want and I will make sure you get it.” He said and I thought about it for a minute.

“Sounds like a good deal... Do I have a limit?” I asked, just so I knew what I could ask for.

“No. Whatever you want, baby.” I had to bite down on my lip to not let out a smirk as I knew exactly what I wanted.

“At least two pizzas.” I said as the very first thing because I had my priorities right.

“Sure. What else?”

“Your Bugatti when we get back home.”

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“No.”

“Too late. You said anything I want.” I pointed out.

“Anything but that. If you want a diamond necklace, I will get you one. If you want the Maserati, you can have it. But you can’t drive my car.”

“Ah, but you see, you always say you’re a man of your word. Are you not going to honor that?” I said smugly as I watched him scowl at me. Honor was

something they took very seriously in the Mafia and they did not fuck around with it. Which was why I used it against him.

“Just a small ride, I promise!” I said.

“Fine.”

“Really?” I asked, surprised he had given in this fast.

“Sure.” He smirked, making me squint my eyes at him.

“Why are you smirking?”

“You want to ride my Bugatti, right?” He raised a brow at me.

“Yes...?” I said a bit unsure.

“Then fine. I will have Bugatti written on my dick so you can ride it. You can’t play games with me, baby, always win.” I gave him a bored look and his smirk widened.

“You meant to drive, my love. Not ride.”

“Oh, fuck...” I sighed when I realized my mistake.

“I will steal it then.” I huffed out and he put me down to get

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into the car.

“Try, and you will see what will happen to you.” Damiano leaned down to me, his face close to mine.

“Are you going to spank me?” I mocked as I knew he usually did that as a part of his punishment.

“No, my love. Something much, much worse.” His sadistic tone sent chills down my spine.

“And you’re not ready for it. Yet. But you will soon.” His thumb went along my jaw, making me let out a breath I didn’t know I was holding. Damiano had me

up against the car and pressed his lower body into me, having me feel his excitement in his pants.

“What is it?” My question came out breathlessly as my body reacted to his words.

“Are you getting wet by the thought of it?” He whispered in my ear, his hands trailed down my stomach and stopped right between my legs.

“The thought of me giving you sweet tortures to your wet pussy?”

“I...Mnh...” I couldn’t concentrate when he started to rub me outside my leggings. My body reacted on its own and I spread my legs slightly to give him better access, I wanted to feel more and he knew it as he applied more pressure, building my excitement while he nibbled on my earlobe.

Then he stopped.

“Why did you stop?” I almost cried out. It felt really good and

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then he just stopped!

“Play games with me and I won’t let you come. No matter how much you beg. I will make you go crazy. Understood?” His

voice was extremely low and grabbed my chin to make me look at him.

“So, you’re not going to fuck me now?” I said, completely ignoring his threat as he had me worked up and I really wanted him to touch me again.

“Do you want me to?” He smirked as his thumb went across my lips.

“Yes.” I didn’t care how fast that came out.

“Hmm, you do deserve a good round of fucking after today. could take you nice and good in the Maserati.”

“Excellent.” I said breathlessly. He pulled my bottom lip between his lips, going in for a kiss

“Too bad you tried to play me.” Damiano then stepped completely away from me.

“I don’t like you today.” I muttered grimly and got inside the car.

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Damiano

“How come you want to train me all of sudden?” Althaia asked as I drove.

“It’s just that you didn’t seem too happy about when Arianna wanted to train me.”

“I know. At the time, Arianna had pointed out it would be for the best to train you after the night of the auction. I didn’t want to realize it back then, thinking I would be able to protect you at all times....” I frowned as I remembered back to it, seeing her covered in blood and looking completely lost.

“I had to come to terms with I wouldn’t be able to control everything. And she was right. If I train you, at least I will know you would be able to defend yourself and stand a chance.” I said.

That night when I found her in the woods haunted me for weeks. The way her body fell limp against my body, and the blood that kept flowing from between her legs had me freeze on the spot for the first time in my life.

It all felt too familiar.

The way Sienna had died in my arms, and now I had Althaia in my arms, fearing she wouldn’t come back to me. She got pale almost instantly. No color was present except for the blood on her hands after killing one of them. I held her tightly into me, refusing to let go of her or let anyone else near her as I continued to shake her awake. But her eyes remained closed.

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The only thing that kept me somewhat sane was when I felt her pulse.

I got pulled out of my thoughts when Althaia took my hand off the steering wheel, not realizing how I was clenching tightly around it. She smiled beautifully and held my hand in hers, caressing it. With one look at her, I immediately relaxed and it was as if she knew while she continued to lightly caress my hand.

“Thank you.” She said. I took her hand and placed a kiss.

“But it doesn’t mean you can do stupid shit just because I’ve decided to train you.” I told firmly to her.

“But how else would I show off my new skills then?” She grinned.

“Althaia.” I warned.

“I’m just kidding.” She laughed.

“... For now.” I glanced at her, seeing her continue to snicker for herself. I shook my head at her in amusement.

That woman was truly something else.

I continued to drive for a while as I had another surprise for her. I wanted to show her what she had praised and talked highly about when she met Mr. Roberts. I glance at Althaia, seeing her looking curiously out of the window as soon as we drove onto a dirt path.

“Is this your vineyard?!” She gasped excitedly, taking a quick glance at me before sticking her head out of the window to look at the rows of grape vines.

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“It is.” I smiled. The sun was slowly starting to set, creating a rather imposing scenery over the green hills.

“Wow... This place is beautiful.” Althaia was in awe as we drove past the many rows of grape vines and small houses. The vineyard landscape was a village on its own with beautiful nature wherever you looked. People who resided here were the people who worked incredibly hard to get the wine to the quality it was today and make it one of the most expensive wines on the market.

I parked the car close to a familiar house.

“This place is so peaceful and so cute!” Althaia beamed as her eyes landed on a two-story brick-colored house.

“Let me show you around for a bit.” I said to her before getting out and around the car to open the door for her. Just as she got out, an older, short woman made an appearance.

“Oh, in my heart, I knew it was you!” She gasped when she saw

“Vico! Vico! Come quick!” She shouted behind her shoulder and walked as fast as she could toward me before embracing me in her arms.

“Ciao, Chiarina.” I chuckled when she tried to squeeze me hard with her short frame

“Ay, Chiarina, what are you shouting for?” Vico came out of the house with his eyes narrowed before they went wide when he spotted me.

“Mio Dio, Damiano!” His eyes gleamed and made a small run toward me. Chiarina stepped aside for Vico to embrace me as

well.

“Ciao, Vico. How have you been?” I let out a laugh as he continued to slap my back in greeting.

“Oh no, we have not seen you in months so we ask how you have been.” Chiarina half-scolded and put her hands on her hips.

“My apologies, it wasn’t my intention. I’ve been good. Great, actually.” I turned around and saw Althaia with a smile plastered on her face as she observed everything.

“Who’s the young lady?” Vico asked and I held my hand out for Althaia. She placed her hand in mine and came to stand next to me.

“Vico, Chiarina, this is Althaia. My love. Althaia, meet Vico and Chiarina Mancini.”

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“Buonasera Mr. and Mrs. Mancini.” Althaia greeted them in Italian with a smile. Both Vico and Chiarina were baffled for a moment, looking at Althaia as if she was not real.

“Finally!” They both exclaimed at the same time and shoved me away to hug her. I shook my head at them as they gathered around her, holding her hands and giving her endless compliments as talked to her with so much

excitement. Althaia smiled shyly at them and a blush crept on her face.

“Can I get my woman back, please?” I stepped in to save her from getting overwhelmed. Vico and Chiarina may be older but their energy was like kids on a sugar high.

“Well done, son!” Vico gave my back another slap while grinning widely.

“Beautiful, dear!” She pinched Althaia’s cheeks, and she let out a laugh at their reactions.

“I know.” I smiled. I grabbed her by the waist, coming to her rescue otherwise they wouldn’t let her go.

“Come inside! Let me cook you dinner. Look how skinny you are! Ay, Damiano.” Chiarina’s forehead creased as she gave a disapproving look. I couldn’t help but laugh at being called skinny.

“Another time, Chiarina. I just wanted to check up on you and show Althaia around for a bit.”

“Don’t let us wait months for us to see you again,

understood?!” Vico contributed.

“I promise.” They gave an approving nod before saying their

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goodbyes to us. I led Althaia away from them and guided her in the direction of the grape vines to give her a tour.

“That was a bit overwhelming.” Althaia chuckled.

“But they sure are cute and so pure-hearted!”

“They are. I have known them since I was a kid. They have been working for the family for over twenty years and practically helped in raising us.” I explained.

Vico and Chiarina were always in the picture for as long as I could remember. They were loyal and pure-hearted people and part of the family. I would always make sure they were doing well when I took over for my father. It was the least I could do for their hard work and loyalty.

“It’s without a doubt they love and care for you. Very typical of grandparents to scold you for not eating enough.” Althaia laughed.

“I apparently need to spend more time in the gym.”

“Are you insane? Are those muscles not enough for you? You already have an impressive body!” She exclaimed, her eyes going down my body.

“She called me skinny. In other words, she called me small.” I pointed out to her, making her scoff.

“Please, there is nothing small about you.” She rolled her eyes at me when I smirked at her words.

“Zip it.” She said before I could tease her with it.

We went up a small hill, coming to a stop at the top to give her the best view of the vineyard landscape.

“Wow... This could not be any more majestic. It looks like it’s straight out of a painting!” The sunset was shining on her face, making her eyes sparkle as she looked at the incredible view of rows of grapes that went as far as the eye could see, and houses scattered around the land.

“Of the things I have achieved, this is one of them I’m most proud of.” I told her as I watched the view.

“Vico and Chiarina are in control of everything here. They have over thirty years of winemaking experience and work tremendously hard to ensure everything is perfect. They make sure the vines get pruned in the winter to

remove the dead ends to make sure they grow stronger and healthier. The vines will then provide substantially more fruit over the summer.” I explained and told her more about the process of winemaking, watching her absorb every piece of information.

“Italy was among the countries that were hit the hardest by the economic crisis, and the unemployment rate rose drastically. You were not wrong when you told Mr. Roberts about nearly all vineyards favor employing more technology than man. I wanted to change that. To help improve the economy by creating jobs for the community. We expanded in no time. Do you see all these houses present? People loved the job, the bond, and the community that had been formed here, and eventually, we had to build houses for them to stay close to what they love doing.”

“I can hear the pride in your voice.” Her mouth curved into a smile and wrapped her arms around my torso.

“I’m proud to be able to give something back to my people.” I caressed her hair as she looked at me with her sparkling eyes.

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“You’re a good man for caring about your people. Many who possess power like you wouldn’t even have cared.”

“I’m far from a good man.” I said quietly to her. I had done unimaginable things to people. I still did. There was no way I could ever see myself as a good man in that sense.

“Well, I strongly disagree. Look what you have created!” She gestured to the vineyards.

“This wouldn’t have happened without you. You have created a whole village for people who love working for you. You are a good man with a good heart, and I love you for it.” She smiled and stepped on her toes and kissed me with her soft lips.

“And I love you.” I said against her lips before deepening the kiss.

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We gave our goodbyes to Vico and Chiarina and promised we would be back soon. We drove for a little while before coming to a stop in front of a mansion.

“We’ll spend the night here. Just the two of us.” I took her hand and lead her inside.

“Is this you rebelling against Nonna?” She teased with a chuckle.

“I am not spending one more night without you sleeping by my side. If I can’t do that in her house then I will just take you away.” It was one night without her and I hated it. It kept me awake most of the time, annoyed that I couldn’t hold her in my arms while she slept.

“Well, I’m not going to complain about that.” Althaia looked around the mansion as I led her upstairs to the master bedroom.

“I’ve made sure you have everything you need here, and there is a hot tub in the bathroom.” I watched her eyes widen.

“Oh, my God, yes! We’re going straight to the tub.” She grabbed my hand and dragged me with her to the bathroom where the hot tub was already ready. She started the shower as she undressed, took a quick rinse before going to the tub, and let out a sigh as she lowered her body into the hot water.

I followed her lead and got into the hot tub with her, the jetstreams hitting my body and giving the sense of a pleasurable massage.

“Just what I needed after you made me run today.” Althaia sighed in delightfulness and closed her eyes.

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“I’ll make sure to have the hot tub ready again for you next time.” I said and moved to sit behind her to rub her body.

“I feel like I’m in heaven right now to complain about you wanting me to run again next time.” Her body completely relaxed as she leaned against me. I

rubbed her body, giving her a slight massage to prevent her body from being completely sore.

“I told you I would make it up to you.” My hands wandered around her body, my lips trailing from her shoulder, up to the side of her neck, and to her earlobe. She let out a small moan as I played with her breasts and nibbled her earlobe. I was already hard just by touching her body but that moan sent pleasurable shivers down my spine.

She moved her neck for me to have better access as I

plastered kisses on her neck, sucking lightly on her skin while I ventured one hand down her stomach. Just before I reached down between her legs, I stopped.

“Althaia?” I called after her quietly but I got no response.

Was she being serious?

“Of course, you fell asleep.” I sighed. I had to adjust myself as I now had my rather excited length painfully pressed up against her back, and now waiting for it to die down.

I closed the door behind me to the office after I had tucked Althaia into bed. She didn’t wake up once and was completely knocked out. That run today must have exhausted her

entirely.

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I sat down behind the desk and pulled out the necklace to look at it. My eyes narrowed as I held the heirloom under the light, examining it as I knew was off about it.

And there it was.

I opened the drawer and grabbed a magnet. I put the magnet close to the pendant, making sure to disrupt any signal being picked up before smashing it down on the desk and

shattering the pendant.

“Fucking bastard.” I made a tsking sound. The real pendant had been swapped out with a fake. This one was made out of glass. I moved around a few pieces of the glass before getting to the small device that had been placed inside of it. I leaned back in my seat, taking a closer look at it. It wasn’t a tracking device but a microphone. And this could only mean one thing which complicated things even more.

I grabbed my phone when it started to ring.

“Antonio.”

“She’s awake.”

“Good. And?”

“She’s suffering from memory loss at the moment.”

“I need her clear when I get back.”

“We will do whatever it takes to make her remember.” I nodded as I twiddled the microphone between my fingers

“And one more thing.” I said as I squeezed the microphone, breaking it in half.

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“I need you to prepare every single one and get everything ready. For when I get back, there will be war.”

“Understood.”

I hung up the phone, knowing he would make sure everything was ready. I grabbed the small box that had been placed in the drawer and looked at it.

For her, I would destroy the whole world.

I put the box in my pocket, making my way out of the office and towards the bedroom where she was sleeping peacefully.

Chapter 200

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Althaia

The sound of my stomach rumbling woke me up, reminding me just how hungry I actually was. I rubbed my eyes as I slowly sat up on the bed. I looked around with my tired eyes, seeing it was completely dark in the bedroom. I looked next to me on the bed but was met with an empty space.

“Damiano?” I called out after him but got no response. I called again and listened for any movement in the house, but it was as quiet as it could be.

Weird. Where did he go?

I turned on the lamp on the nightstand next to me, seeing a small note attached to it.

Come and find me.

– The Devil.

I found myself smiling at the note. Looked like someone was in a playful mood tonight. Either that or he got bored when I was asleep. I looked at the time, seeing I had been asleep for a good two hours. I scrunched up my face when I realized I had been sleeping for a long time and he definitely got bored. I was still naked, having me wonder if I fell asleep in the hot tub. It was too relaxing and I couldn't help but slowly doze off.

I got up from the bed and towards the bathroom. I brushed my teeth, washed my face, and fixed my hair with my hands. My hair was curlier than it usually was because of the heat but I didn't mind it one bit as I liked the way it curled around my

face.

Getting back to the bedroom, I went to the walk-in closet to find something to wear. I found another note attached to a hanger where an outfit already was ready for me. I looked at the note, finding it funny this was the way he decided to

communicate.

I want to see you in this, my love.

-Your Villain.

Even when he wasn't around he could make me smile like a big goof and have my body flutter with just written words. I got dressed in the outfit he picked for me and took a look in the mirror. It was a red, two-piece outfit with a mesh mini skirt and an off-shoulder crop top with ruffled sleeves with a lace-up in the front. Of course, he would pick this color. He liked red on me and it did give the outfit both a sexy and cute look at the same time.

I bet the only reason he wanted me to wear this was that we were alone. He would create a blood bath if I went out like

this, kill any man that dared to look at me. That was what I found amusing about Damiano. He was one jealous man but never once had he ever said to me to dress more modestly whenever I showed some skin. He would simply just kill the others if their gaze lingered on me.

I made my way downstairs to the dimly lit living room but still no sign of Damiano. Where in the world did he go? I went to the front door and I found another note.

Good girl. Now, follow the path.

Yours,

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Oh, damn... Even in writing the good girl part had me slightly blushing. Wait a minute... Was this another test to see if I

could follow orders?

"I will bite your dick if this is a test." I called out if he was somewhere, hiding to see if I truly followed his order. But it was still quiet. No movements could be heard, meaning he wasn't inside the house. Or maybe he was? Even though he was huge with an impressive build, he was somehow light on his feet. I decided he wasn't inside the house and opened the door to follow the path.

The night weather was at a comfortable temperature. It wasn't too hot nor was it cold. It was just perfect. I continued to follow the dirt path, looking around to admire nature during the quiet nighttime. Luckily, it wasn't too dark as there had been placed lights on the ground along the path. The path soon turned into a hill and I groaned as my legs were a bit sore from my run earlier.

"Is this his way of telling me I need to lose weight by making me run and climb freaking hills today?" I groaned to myself but stopped when I found a single rose in the middle of the path. I picked it up as there was yet another note attached to it.

You're almost there, amore mio.

– Damiano.

My heart warmed at the sight of rose petals that now covered the entire path. The lights on either side of the path and the rose petals on the ground had me smiling big and curious about what was awaiting me.

The closer I got to the top of the hill, the clearer I could see it

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was warmly lit up at the top. Finally reaching my destination, a small gasp escaped my lips at the sight in front of me. Lanterns hanging from the large tree gave the area a warm tone to it, and right under the tree, blankets and pillows were cozily set up with food and drinks.

And right there, in the end, was Damiano with his back facing

He turned around, the light from the lanterns making his eyes seem even more golden than they already were. He looked at me softly with a smile that had my heart skip a beat every single time.

"Good girl. You made it." I was at loss for words when he came to stand in front of me with a huge bouquet of red roses.

"You look beautiful as ever, my love." Damiano's eyes trailed down my body before he leaned down to me, giving me a sweet kiss that had my body tingle like crazy.

"I... What is all of this?" I asked as he handed me the roses. For some reason, my heart was starting to beat faster.

"A date. I never took you out on a proper date. This is me trying to make up for it. Do you like it?" He asked and gestured to the setup.

"I love it! This is so beautiful." I couldn't stop looking around and just thinking about how he had planned all this for a date.

"Thank you so much!" I said excitedly, making him smile when I leaned into him for one more kiss.

"Come, you must be hungry." He held my hand and led me to the large fuzzy blankets.

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